

WASHINGTON, DC— Today General David Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress on the situation in Iraq. To follow is Representative Peter DeFazio's statement on their testimony:

“As I said when the President announced his plan in January to escalate the war in Iraq by sending tens of thousands of additional U.S. troops, no one should be surprised when a temporary reduction in violence is achieved. Indeed, it would be surprising if 30,000 additional U.S. troops did not have any impact on the level of violence.

“Unfortunately, to the extent there has been progress on security, something that independent experts and even our intelligence agencies question, it is largely irrelevant to whether the chaos in Iraq will be resolved or whether the civil war will continue.

“Ultimately, the only question that matters is whether or not Iraq political leaders are making the compromises necessary to bring about reconciliation among Sunnis, Shias and Kurds? Only that result will bring stability to Iraq. Only that result can end the violence that is driven by 1,400 years of sectarian animosity.

Only that result will lead to the rebuilding of the country and the delivery of services needed by all of the Iraqi people.

In response to that question, the unanimous answer is no.

“The reality is that the U.S. military cannot resolve the civil war in Iraq. Only the Iraqi leaders can. As Admiral Michael G. Mullen, President Bush's nominee to head the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified to Congress at the end of July 2007.

Unless the Iraqi government takes advantage of the 'breathing space' U.S. forces are providing, 'no amount of troops in no amount of time will make much of a difference.'

“Regrettably, there is no credible evidence that Iraqi political leaders are interested or willing to take advantage of the situation and achieve national reconciliation.

“It is past time for our troops to come home. Our troops have won the war that Congress authorized. There is no threat from weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein is dead.

Congress must establish a timeline by which U.S. troops are removed from Iraq over the next year.

Being confronted with the reality of a U.S. withdrawal will force the Iraqi factions to reach the political compromises necessary to move their country forward.

If not, there is no reason to prolong the U.S. involvement in Iraq if we want a stable country more than the Iraqi people and their elected leaders do.”